

*A Rambling Letter to a Friend.*

Dear Tom !

**I** AM sorry, that not seeing me in six Months, should make you so much forget the natural Caution of my Temper, as to believe I would, after the late Address, presume to send you any thing more concerning the Affairs of Parliament, than what you find in the printed Votes. I always thought it pragmatistical in Men without, to pretend to relate the secret Springs and Turns of Affairs transacted within Doors. I know indeed, that it is the Right of all Constituents to instruct their Representatives as far as concerns their particular Interests; but the Representatives are not obliged to consult their Electors, and much less other People, upon the Common Good of the whole Republick, unless where Fundamental Alterations are consider'd: and I believe many sagacious Members are of Opinion, that our Curiosity ought to be abundantly satisfy'd with what they have ordered their Speaker to publish to the World, till by their Debates they have matur'd their Propositions into Acts.

But, *Tom*, tho I will not meddle with the Business of the Senate-House, I will, because you say you love to read my Scribbles, set you down short Narratives of some Conversation I have met with.

I have met with strange Men, who yet plead for Excises; and it is impossible to convince them, that, in case we had Excises, the landed Men would pay all the Reckoning at last. Indeed they have been a little struck, when I have told them that a General Excise, artfully managed, would supply the Want of a Standing Army, and insensibly regulate Corporations.

*likewise* I told them ~~so~~, in the hurry of our Discourse, that perhaps too great Impositions upon Trade were not so proper as some imagine: for if you load home Commodities with too great Customs, you hinder their Exportation; and what is charged upon Foreign Goods, comes at length out of the Pockets of the Consumers.

But I will proceed to the next Pack of Politicians, who would scarce have us eat, drink, or wear, but what is the Produce of our own Country. To these I have, sometimes with, and sometimes without success, made answer:

That our Riches, the Figure we make in *Europe*, our Safety from Foreign Invaders, and the Security of our Liberties at Home, do all of them depend upon our Trading Abroad. And these Assertions I have endeavoured to make good by saying,

That particular Persons may, but a Nation cannot, grow richer by Trading only within it self.

That we must no longer hope to be the Umpires of *Europe*, if our Wealth should fail us.

That we cannot breed Seamen, or maintain a Navy (which are the Forts and Garisons of an Island) if we entertain not Commerce with other Nations.

That if we had none, or an insufficient Navy, Standing Forces, which might, nay would one time or other, enslave us, must become indispensibly



spensibly necessary to preserve us from being insulted and invaded by our Neighbours ; and consequently, that if we leave off to be a Trading, we must resolve to be a Military Kingdom, and be content with a Government proportioned to that State of Things.

No sooner had I said this, but I was asked my Opinion of the *East-India* Trade ; and was forced to reply, That having never been bred up to any Trade, it was hard to examine me concerning the particular Branches of it: However I thought long Voyages made able Seamen ; bulky Merchant Ships might, in case of Necessity, be turn'd into small Men of War : and since we could by no Sumptuary Laws prohibit the wearing them in other Countrys, whatever we might do in our own, it was possibly worth while to consider, whether we, or our Neighbours, should be the *European* Carriers of the *East-Indian* Commodities. However, I said, the Parliament is perhaps in the right to examine the Quantities of Bullion exported by trading to those Parts.

From hence we fell into a Discourse concerning *Publick Credit* ; and I had the impudence to maintain,

That it must, like *Cesar's* Wife, not only be chaste, but unsuspected ; and, if the Publick has given a Security, that can be by Chicanery contested, yet the Interpretation must lean towards the Interest of the Creditors of the Community ; for it may reasonably be supposed, that those Creditors rather trusted to the Equity and honest Meaning of those they dealt with, than to their own Judgment and Skill in Conveyances.

That it is more necessary it should be so in these days than ever, because, as honest old *Wallop* us'd to say, *War is changed from Fighting into Eating, Drinking, and Campaigning* : To carry on which new sort of Military Art, I am sure Money is the one thing necessary.

That, as in great Conflagrations, because they don't know how or where to be repay'd for them, Men are not willing to let their Houses be blown up till they are overtaken with the Fire : So in a great and general Exigence, Men will rather keep their Money till it be seiz'd by the Enemy, than lend it to the Publick, if a Nation defeats the Security it gives, or does not make good all its Contracts with private Men.

That it is more particularly necessary for us to be careful of *Publick Credit* at this Juncture, because, tho the *Scots* are a necessitous, yet they are a stout and warm People, and we may possibly have troubles from that Quarter.

I don't say this as if I doubted whether we should at long run be too hard for them ; but our danger from that sensible and daring People will be greater, and may be more lasting, if Men should be once possess'd with an Opinion, that they can't lend securely on an Act of Parliament.

And here I can't but commend to thee, Dear *Tom*, what the Lords have lately done in the Case of the Bankers, where, tho they had the Opinion of great Men that differ'd, yet they decided according to those Arguments which seem'd most favourable to *Publick Credit*.

I will tell you another Reason, why it is more particularly necessary to be careful at this Juncture of *Publick Credit*, and then conclude ; and that is, Because otherwise Men will scarce buy *Irish* Lands, tho the Parliament makes an Act for selling them.

Thus I have, to appease you for my not meddling with things above me, sent you my Rambles, with which you may light your Pipe. And so, Dear *Tom*, adieu.